

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ERDA-05 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-07 IO-10 L-02 NSAE-00

OMB-01 PA-01 PM-03 PRS-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 TRSE-00 NSC-05 ACDA-05 BIB-01 EB-07 COME-00

ISO-00 /088 W

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P R 161603Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5691

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT

REF: THE HAGUE 1857 AND 1907 (NOTAL)

1. BOTH MOD VREDELING AND FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL HAVE PUBLICLY REAFFIRMED THEIR SUPPORT OF CHOICE OF F-16 AS F-104 REPLACEMENT. ON APRIL 15 VREDELING IN TESTIMONY BEFORE UPPER CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT SAID HE WOULD STAND BY HIS DECISION TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET CHOICE OF F-16 DESPITE RESOLUTION AGAINST IT PASSED BY LABOR PARTY CONGRESS APRIL 11.

2. AMONG REASONS GIVEN BY VREDELING FOR STAYING WITH CHOICE OF F-16 WAS THAT HE HAD ALREADY TOLD HIS COLLEAGUES, DEFENSE MINISTERS OF BELGIUM, DENMARK, AND NORWAY, OF HIS DECISION AND THAT AT THE VERY LEAST
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SOME WEIGHT MUST BE GIVEN TO DUTCH RELIABILITY IN

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT.

3. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONING, VREDELING STATED THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISION WAS CABINET'S AND NOT PARLIMENT'S. MATTER WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO VOTE BY PARLIAMENT DIRECTLY BUT IT COULD, OF COURSE, BY VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE BRING DOWN GIVERNMENT AT ANY TIME.

4. ACCORDING TO REPORT IN LEFT WING INDEPENDENT VOLKSKRANT, FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL TOLD HIS DANISH AND BELGIAN COUNTERPARTS IN LUXEMBOURG THAT HE WAS FULLY CONVINCED BY VREDELING'S ARGUMENTS FOR CHOICE OF F-16 AND WOULD SUPPORT VREDELING'S DECISION IN CABINET DESPITE RESOLUTION OF LABOR PARTY CONGRESS.

5. AT PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER SECOND DAY LABOR PARTY CONGRESS, PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL SAID CABINET STILL HAD TO CONSIDER POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE F-16 IN GENERAL "BUT FROM MILITARY POINT OF VIEW IT IS BEST PLANE."

6. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL AND HIS LABOR PARTY COLLEAGUES IN COALITION CABINET WOULD HAVE NO DESIRE TO BRING DOWN PRESENT GOVERNMENT OVER F-104 ISSUE, AND COOLER HEADS IN LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP PROBABLY FEEL THE SAME WAY. MOREOVER, IT APPEARS THAT EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO AVOID OPEN CLASH BETWEEN CABINET AND PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. ONE COMPROMISE MENTIONED PUBLICLY IS THAT CABINET OPT FOR F-16 BUT TAKE LESS THAN 102 AIRCRAFT. THIS REDUCTION BEING STRONGLY RESISTED BY MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OFFICIALS. GOULD

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